

Wednesday, July 28, 2004

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

by Bruce Barrett

Bettina Lesieur -
Duxbury Memories

"So much to paint," said Bettina Lesieur, "and so little time."

She wasn't painting at the moment. She was framing and hanging works for her 1st Annual Summer Art Exhibit (Friday, July 30th through Sunday, August 8th, 10 am to 7 pm daily) at her Saint George Street Gallery (934-5103). Her works already cover the walls. Many more lay waiting for frames, backs, and spaces of their own.

Bettina works in oil on panel (pegboard without the holes), a combination that brings out brilliant color and dries quickly, so she can work quickly.

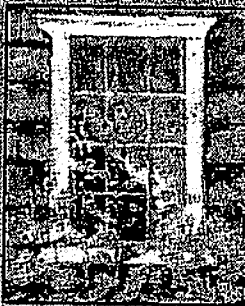
"I don't have time to wait forever for paint to dry," she said.

Yet there is nothing rushed in her work. Instead, her style of contemporary impressionism blends fields of color with exquisite detail, both precision and dreamscape captured in each piece.

She pays particular attention to the play of light and shadow, executed with a confidence and clarity that she reinforces by working from photographs—her own, for the most part. But once the paint hits the panel, each work takes on a life of its own. The camera can provide reference points, but the work of art is something more.

Her subjects vary, including still life, wildlife and pets, houses and gardens, but classic Duxbury scenes stand out as favorites. She never tires of Cove Street Landing on the Bluefish River, and several pieces feature Duxbury Bay and the Powder Point Bridge. Part of the fun in Bettina's work is saying, "Oh! I know that spot!" or more likely, "I love that view." She brings a similar eye, though, to scenes in Provence, the Caribbean, or Cape Cod and the Islands.

For that matter, Bettina can bring the artist's eye to your scene. She works on commission, painting your favorite place, your special vista, or your home. For a recent commission she painted a lovely Duxbury home in four seasons (four panels), for a family moving away and growing up, so that each member could hold the memory. Along with the varied seasons, the paintings presented slightly different viewpoints, each a work in itself.



Hollyhock Window

Another favorite theme: gates, doorways, windows, views that take you through a space into light and color beyond, and invite you to stay.

"I find them driving country roads, the white lines or dotted lines on the map," she said. "I just get lost, but I'm never lost because I can always follow my tracks back."

The result is a never-ending supply of scenes off the beaten path (her favorite kind) and a unifying sense of presence and familiarity, like memories of places seen and not yet seen.

Bettina's mom and dad both were accomplished artists, her mother until she died and her father still, and both are deep influences. Robert and Maria Lesieur studied at the Vesper George School of Art, and Robert was a long-time friend and contemporary of local marine artist Marshall Joyce. Artists' quotes can be elusive, so we called Bettina's dad to make sure we got one right.

"A good artist can render what he sees well," he said. "A great artist can render what he sees and make it better—enhancing, manipulating to get the most out of it, creating."

Set aside some time for Bettina's show. The Opening Reception will be Saturday, July 31st from 6 to 10 pm. Park at the back of Farfar's parking lot; the gallery is cat's-corner across the street. Enter through a jewel-box garden, and find your Duxbury memories framed on Bettina's wall, each a creation indeed.